

AFRICAN NEWSLETTER OF PAX ROMANA-IMCS



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Nº 1

Communication Is Needed

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the modern epoch, according to John Nef of the University of Chicago, is the failure of intelligent men to communicate with one another and, resulting directly from this, their failure to understand one another. If the intellectual world is divided it is perhaps so because channels of communication between those who make it up are either lacking or insufficient in extent. The attempt to overcome this situation poses other difficulties. Those interested in the spread of the intellectual apostolate shy automatically away from the further multiplication of publications; there is so much to read now that one is afraid to add even more and run the risk of overwhelming people with a sea of printed material.

In bringing out the present newsletter, the General Secretariat has had its own hesitations. It first of all proposed the idea to African groups with which it has contact to sound out their reactions. Replies indicated enthusiasm and a deep appreciation of the need for such a publication on a continent where distances make other forms of communication almost impossible and where the exchange of ideas between Christian and Catholic elements is of such fundamental importance for the development of apostolic work.

These few pages, then, represent an ambitious idea which will become successful only if the groups to which they are addressed agree to cooperate in its maintenance. They will find here a forum lacking the architectural beauty of the Romans' meeting place, but potentially offering the same benefits: an exchange of ideas, a meeting place for apostolic investigation, a center of discussion of those questions of deepest importance to Africa and the whole of the Christian world. These pages can be made into something exciting and stimulating or they can become something dismal and disappointing. All that depends on the attitude of those who read them and who will be responsible for their contents.

Principally an Idea

If it is communication that is responsible for the degree to which men cooperate with one another, then Pax Romana is well aware of its particular responsibilities in the formation and development of apostolic awareness. The Movement, founded in 1921 at the end of the first great war, is not terribly interested in the mere assembling of people or in the doubtful qualities of numbers and masses. What it is interested in is the mutual help that students throughout the world can give to one another because of a dynamic ideal which inspires them. The Movement as something organized exists because the spirit which it tries to inculcate is absent from the world and from the university milieu that are its particular concerns.

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It is mainly an idea that is the driving force behind Pax Romana. An idea that the university is something of value and intellectual merit that demands the loyal cooperation of those who belong to it and those who study within its walls. It is because this loyalty and devotedness are lacking and because the university is suffering as a result and failing to accomplish its high mission that Pax Romana organises its activities. To the extent that Catholics are absent from this development, the activities of the Movement are more extensive.

This absence of devoted people from the university and this failure to understand what the university is have produced inevitable repercussions in the professional world. And it is because of this that the Movement is also vitally concerned with the formation of Christianly motivated professional people who look upon their life work as a vocation and not a mere livelihood, who have a sense of their responsibility to humanity and its organisation within given societies. Poverty, misery, social injustice, political oppression are, to greater or lesser extents, the product of indifference and carelessness among university graduates who do not understand this vocation and, not understanding it, are willing to allow others to usurp the rights of the person for goals and reasons that at best are questionable.

One of the Asian federations has called the spirit which should exist among Catholic university people 'divine discontent'. This is a combination of restless impatience with the injustice existing in the world, coupled with a deep understanding of the solution that integral Christianity can bring to the sufferings of people.

Though these things are important they cannot exist within a vacuum. They must be nourished and fed; initial ideas must be enriched through communication with other people in other countries, in other areas of the world. Within the living reality of the Mystical Body of Christ, a community of interest and understanding among Catholic students can, should and, to an extent, does exist, bolstered by that community of ideas which binds them together as university people. It is this community that is Pax Romana's field of work; that is, in a very profound way, Pax Romana itself.

For Africa this can mean a number of direct things. It can mean an introduction of African Catholic students to the international community, to the growing reality of Christ's Mystical Body in the spirits of university students in other parts of the world. It can mean a help to the development of apostolic activities. It can be the source of an indelible Christian mark on the university world of Africa.

A Continent Works

The following articles give some idea of the work of three African student groups in various areas of the continent. These are articles which were not printed in the special edition of the Pax Romana Journal devoted to Africa. It is hoped that they will be the beginning of a continuous exchange of experiences among various African groups.)

Sierra Leone: Among the most happy events in the life of our old and respected College is that of the inauguration of the Catholic Newman Society on 14th March 1954, under the able guidance and direction of Mr. J. Roche, Senior Lecturer in Commerce. The Catholic students of Fourah Bay College are really proud of the fact that they have started the first branch of this great Catholic Society in Sierra Leone.



Catholic Newman Society, founded in memory of, and in order to further the work of Cardinal Newman, a great Catholic Cardinal, teacher and author is well known and respected in all countries of Europe and in America.

A students' branch such as ours is intended to keep the Catholic students in closer touch, and to help them in their social, religious and educational life. In a mixed society such as ours, the need for such a society becomes the more important. But the activities of the society are not to be confined only to the welfare of the students alone; in the community in which we live we hope to be of use whenever it is possible. Any old Catholic student of Fourah Bay College who wishes to become a member should kindly contact the secretary for particulars.

- by J. O. Iweanoge, Secretary
(reprinted from the Catholic Monthly)

Uganda: The Catholic community in this college (Makerere) is very small so its activities are limited. Every Catholic freshman automatically becomes a member of the Augustine Society unless he expressly wishes to stay out of the society. The Augustine Society holds discussions, debates and invites speakers to address its members. The subjects chosen for these activities are mainly religious, moral and intellectual. Non-members are cordially invited to participate in these mental exercises. Thus the Augustine Society seeks to catholicise the university milieu through the intellectual approach. But some of its members specialise in particular Catholic practices.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

The Rosary Group was formed at Makerere in 1952 along the lines suggested by Father Peyton in his 'Family Rosary Crusade'. The aim of the Group is to help in bringing mankind back to God, thus ensuring world peace by following Our Lady's wishes which she made known to us through the three children at Fatima. Membership is confined to those who agree to say the Rosary daily and to meet once a week in the chapel for a recitation of the Rosary as a 'family' of Catholics living at Makerere. They also agree to attend Mass on the First Saturday of every month and to meet in the chapel on that afternoon for an additional 'family' recitation of the Rosary.

During 1953 a change took place. The influence of the Group had extended and daily night prayers in the chapel included the Rosary with the Fatima Antiphon and the final Rosary prayer. This meant that all those attending daily night prayers, whether members of the Group or not, were fulfilling one part of Our Lady's wishes. It meant, too, that the weekly 'family' recitation of the Rosary by the Group was swallowed in this far larger act of worship, as all members of the group attended night prayers. A further change was in the observance of the First Saturdays. The Chaplain agreed to say Mass on First Saturdays for the intention of the Rosary Group and the choir agreed to sing Fatima hymns during the Mass.

The Legionary movement (Legio Mariae), now a world-wide form of Catholic Action, works under the fundamental supposition that Mary is the straight path to the Sacred Heart. It has been in the College since 1947. Its membership in any given year has not been great. But the strength of any Legion is not numerical. Its strength is measured by its apostolic zeal and its spirit of sacrifice and voluntary service. The members of the Makerere Legion are not lacking in these prerequisites.

The Legionnaires aim at self-sanctification and helping others along that narrow way. They endeavour to 'inflamm those who are lukewarm and to bring life back to those who are dead in sin.' They fulfill the second part of their obligation by reminding other students of their church duties or other practices such as waking friends up in the morning for daily mass and by counteracting evil practices through discussions or manipulating conversations so that they are decent. They also assign to themselves certain syllabuses of study in Catholic Apologetics with special emphasis on the rôle Our Lady plays in religion. Thus armed, they tackle knotty problems raised by fellow Catholic students and try to make converts through discussion and exemplary living.

As to personal edification, the Legionnaires have great devotion to Our Lady and through her to Our Lord. This is shown by their regular attendance at Mass and other services. One member of the Legion has been assigned the task of studying the practices of the Miraculous Medal Movement.

- by John Kaboha
Makerere College

Gold Coast: The Aquinas Society was founded in the first term of 1948 (i.e. October-December), when the University itself received its first students. The society had less than ten members but through the indefatigable efforts of Mrs Bernice Hamilton, former Head of the History Department, and two pioneer students - Sebastian Oppon and Addai Quansah - the society took roots. It is completing its sixth year this October, and it has a membership of just under 60.

The aim of the Society has been to promote the religious, educational, and social aspects of Catholic Student life. Its activities can be broadly divided into two categories. The first category embraces activities which are open to the non-Catholic public. We have had lectures from many notable Catholics in the country, some of whom have been the Rt Rev. Bishop A. Noser, formerly of the Accra Diocese of the Gold Coast and now of British Guiana, Mr. Patrick Branigan, former Minister of Justice, Miss J. Gordon of St. Augustine's College, and Mr. Patrick Hulede of the College of Technology, Kumasi. The subjects for lectures have ranged from Christian Education and Marriage to Catholics in Movies. Senior members and students have also given lectures, or held debates on various aspects of Catholic life. The Cinema Unit of the Catholic Action in our diocese has been giving shows to the College under our auspices. These lectures, debates, brain trusts, cinema shows, etc. have had a very good patronage from the non-Catholic public.

The second category consists of activities which are primarily meant for the promoting of the spiritual life of the members of the society, but to which non-Catholics are welcome. For instance, our constitution establishes three Sundays of the year on which members are to attend Holy Communion. Two annual retreats have been conducted in January, 1953, and January, 1954, and it has been decided that each year should begin with a retreat. In February, 1951, our Society was well represented in the First National Eucharistic Congress in Kumasi, on the Executive Committee of which served our then President, Mr. Stephen Mensah. A pilgrimage has just been completed to the Our Lady of Fatima Shrine, Accra, as part of our activities for the Marian Year. The Society has the management of all aspects of the Church organisation which fall in the province of lay apostolate, and it has the advice and encouragement of the Catholic Chaplain, Rev. Father J. Koster, S.V.D., himself a lecturer in the



Physics Department. This year also saw the beginning of a series of lecturettes, given by students and senior members, on topics like Infallibility, Devotion to Mary and the Saints, Indulgences, etc. which are frequently objected to by Protestants. This series of lecturettes is meant to instruct members more on these subjects so that they can explain them properly to their Protestant friends.

At the beginning of this academic year it was thought that a small group within the Society, which might be the centre of energy, would be beneficial, and the result was the formation of a Praesidium of the Legion of Mary under the title of Mater Boni Consilii. It has just held its sixteenth meeting. Through the efforts of its few members the Praesidium has been able to help in the spreading of Catholic literature. From rough estimates, 520 copies of a Catholic Weekly Newspaper - the Standard -, and 400 copies of pamphlets on Catholic doctrines and tradition have been sold to the Catholic community here. The Praesidium has, through its members, been able to give 100 pamphlets gratis to non-Catholics.

The Society, in conclusion, has been one of the most active of all societies and clubs in the University College. With the help of the Catholic senior members, who are eligible into the society as "special" members, this small group, comprising but one-sixth of the total population of the College, has made its presence felt. It is the fervent hope that through its activities, the Society's out-going members can themselves promote the work of Catholic Lay Apostolate in the Gold Coast at large.

- by E.A. Ulzon, President
University College of
the Gold Coast

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

Welcome Is More than a Word

Since the second great war the number of students who study overseas has grown by leaps and bounds - grown to such an extent that it has taken on the proportions of a major problem. The latter fact, however, may be a healthy indication that people in welcoming countries have finally awakened to the realisation that the lot of foreign students is not an easy one and that superficial programs of welcome are not enough. The foreign student - whether he be from Africa, Asia or another country - must be treated like a human being and not some sort of curiosity that is of momentary interest.

In a recent visit to the General Secretariat of Pax Romana, His Grace, the Bishop of Tanganyika stressed with eloquence the vastness of the problem and the threat it represents to the health and growth of the Church in Africa. His Grace insisted that it is fast becoming the major student problem in Catholic African circles. The number of African students who lose the faith while they study abroad is becoming appalling and must be treated seriously by federations in Europe and North America.

The loss of faith apparently does not stem from doctrinal doubts or theological worries. It stems quite simply from the fact that African students living overseas become soon convinced that the Faith is nothing but a Sunday affirmation that is forgotten during the rest of the week. Like Gandhi, they find Christians repugnant and hypocritical while still keeping their deep respect for Christ. This tide could

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be easily turned if Catholic students and their families in other parts of the world made a determined effort to welcome students from abroad and make them feel at home in their temporary surroundings.

For the last few years Pax Romana has been giving more and more attention to this grave question. Next August at the Interfederal Assembly a special commission set up for the purpose will study the whole problem of foreign students. It is hoped that this examination will lead to a serious reform of the present situation.

No reform is possible, however, without close cooperation between students in welcoming lands and in countries which have large numbers studying overseas. Last year's Interfederal Assembly recommended that Asian federations should prepare lists of their members studying abroad; these lists would then be sent to federations in the welcoming countries which would have a solid base of information upon which to work. The same is applicable to African regions and existing African groups are encouraged to do everything possible to collect names of those of their fellow students who plan to study abroad. If possible these lists should be sent to the General Secretariat before 10 August 1954 in order that they may be used during the Interfederal Assembly.

The General Secretariat is also asking African Bishops to perform the same service. On the basis of your information and that received from your Bishops the Movement should be able to do something concrete to help alleviate what has become an extremely dangerous situation.

For the moment there are several international welcoming centers already in existence in principal cities. The following are those known to us:

In Paris: Fraternité Omnes Gentes
7, rue de l'Eperon
Paris, France

In London: Rev. Father John L. Coonan
Chaplain to Overseas Students
13, Devonshire Place
London W.1.

In New York: Grail International Center
370 Riverside Drive
New York City

In Chicago: Crossroads
5621 South Blackstone
Chicago 37, Illinois.

As we receive names of other centers we shall include them in the newsletter.

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Across the Continent

We have received requests from several groups in Africa for the names and addresses of the officers of other groups. We include below a list of these names and addresses. Those groups which so wish can thus enter into contact with others; it is suggested that each group add the following names to its mailing list in order that publications may be exchanged.

In Uganda:

X Mr. George Njenga, Secretary
St. Augustine's Society
Box 262 Makerere College
Kampala

Rev. Father Carney, Chaplain
Makerere College
Kampala

X Mr. Charles Kibe Karanja
St. Ferdinand's Society
Engineering School
Box 1337
Kampala

X In Egypt:

X Monsieur Magdi Doss
Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Egyptienne
11, rue Zaki
Le Caire

In the Gold Coast X Mr. E. A. Ulzen, President
The Aquinas Society
S 23 Legon Hall
University College
Achimota

Rev. Father J. Koster, S.V.D., Chaplain
Physics Department
University College
Achimota

X Mr. Patrick Hulede
Kumasi College of Technology
Kumasi, Ashanti

In Sierra Leone: X Mr. J.C. Roche
Fourah Bay College
Freetown

Mr. R.E. Odinkemolu
The Newman Society
Fourah Bay College
Freetown.



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X In Dakar: X Monsieur Bertin Borna
Cité Universitaire de Fann
Dakar, Senegal

In South Africa: Mr. David Mayne, President
National Catholic Federation of Students
Electrical Engineering Department
University of the Witwatersrand
Milner Park, Johannesburg

Rev. J. P. Fitzgerald, OMI, Chaplain
Oblate Scholasticate, P.O.
Scottsville
Pietermaritzburg

In Basutoland: X Student Publication SEE
Pope Pius XII University College
Via Masenu
Roma.

There are also university colleges in the Belgian Congo, Nigeria and Sudan with which the General Secretariat does not have contact. From what news can be gathered these colleges have fairly large Catholic populations and Catholic student chapels. It is hoped that further information can be obtained.

Editor do "African Newsletter"

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